

REMEDIAL LEARNING PROGRAMME FOR THE ACADEMICALLY BACKWARD CHILDREN

NASREENBANU¹ & K. YASHODA²

¹Principal Scientist, AICRP-HD (All India Coordinated Research Project – Human Development) PGRC,
PJTSAU (Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University), Rajendranagar, Hyderabad, India

²SRF, AICRP-HD, PGRC, PJTSAU, Hyderabad, India

ABSTRACT

A Remedial Learning Programme can boost the learning proficiencies in children who are academically poor. This study (XII Plan period) was undertaken to comprehend the effects of a Remedial Learning Programme. A total of 150 children (6th – 9th classes) were selected for the study. They were chosen from 5 villages of Moinabadmandal, RR district. The AICRP-Child Development unit created simple checklists to identify the learning disabilities of the children of the area. The teachers' opinion on the cause for academic non-progress among the school children was also noted. Subsequently, Remedial Learning Programmes were organized for 10 months (with involvement of the particular teacher teaching that subject). These programmes employed effective teaching approaches to improve the learning skills of the selected students. The scores of the students showed a positive improvement after the implementation of the programme, proving its effectiveness.

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Nowadays, in most parts of the globe education has been commercialized. Tough competition among the students is widely noticed. In such a scenario, only the students with good grades are admitted to good secondary schools and find the course of study of their choice. Ultimately, this translates into better prospects of employment. Therefore, academic accomplishments become the benchmark of self-worth and success.

With globalization and technological growth, education is mandatory for every human pursuit. It is essential for the generation of economic growth and is associated with improved well-being of the individuals, as well as providing better job prospects. Academics help to attain the knowledge and skills essential to improve productivity and the quality of life.

For educationalists, the excellence of the students remains as top priority. Their concern can bring about a transformation locally, regionally, nationally and globally. Educators, trainers, and researchers have for long strived to identify those aspects that efficiently promote learning. These variables are prevalent both inside and outside the school and have a significant impact on the students' quality of academic success.

Context of the Study

The factors that contribute to academic backwardness and are a threat to academic growth need to be identified. This will help in implementing appropriate remedial measures/intervention programmes. These

programmes can be introduced at the school, familial or societal level. The factors responsible for poor academic progress are emotional, environmental and medical. Usually, these factors affect the academics of adolescents. In students, emotional disorders such as anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorders, mood disorders, depression and psychosomatic disorders are widespread.

The environmental factors for poor school grades include the circumstances at home, school, and the neighbourhood. The relation with friends too influences academic performance. Children from broken homes, having alcoholic parents, and subjected to physical and verbal abuse display poor academic performance. In addition, chronic health conditions such as asthma, allergies, repeated otitis media, lead poisoning, cancer, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, type 1 diabetes mellitus, hypothyroidism, hearing loss even unilateral and visual impairment will also result in poor academic performance.

Operational Definitions

Academically Backward Children

According to the guidelines set by the Department of Education, Telangana state, children who have attained a C+ grade or a C grade were deemed as academically poor.

Academic Performance

As per this study, 'Academic performance' denoted the aptitude of the child to perform well in the pre-designated subjects (English, Telugu & Hindi) and possessing some basic academic skills (reading, writing & spelling), which are fundamental for the improvement of grades.

Remedial learning Programme

The term *remedial* denotes amending or improving the student's deficit skills in a particular subject. Therefore, **remedial learning** is a modification in the teaching style that assists to solve the weakness in the academic subject.

Statement of the Problem

To study the Efficiency of the Remedial Learning Programme among academically poor children.

Specific Objectives

- To identify the learning abilities of academically poor children (Secondary school).
- To identify the causes for academic backwardness as comprehended by the school teachers.
- To organize Remedial Learning Programmes.
- To observe the effectiveness of the Remedial Learning Programme.

METHODOLOGY

School children (768 in number) from 5 ZPHS studying in classes 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th were identified for the study. These children were between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

Among the 768 children, 178 (23%) children were identified as academically poor. Out of the 178, 150 were selected for the study. Out of the 150 children, 80 (53%) were boys & 70 (47%) were girls. The academically poor children were identified based on their teacher's observations & academic grades obtained.

Criteria for Sample Selection

Academically poor children (as identified by their class teachers and based on their grades in the designated subjects).

Academic achievement scores of children were acquired from the information available in the previous and the latest examination grade sheets.

Research Strategy Adopted

In order to attain the framed objectives of the study, Remedial Learning Programmes were conducted to improve the learning abilities and academic skills of the academically poor children.

Research Tools Used

In this study, checklists developed by AICRP-CD, Hyderabad centre were employed to identify the learning & academic skills of the academically poor children toward Languages (English, Telugu and Hindi).

Characterization of Academically Backward Children on Selected Parameters

The academically poor children (N=150) were identified based on the following criteria:

- Teacher's assessment/opinion
- Academic performance of the children in the previous year. This data was obtained on the basis of the grading pattern established by the Department of Education, which is illustrated in the following table:

Table 1

Grade	Percentage	Remarks
A + grade	90-100%,	Excellent
A grade	76-89%	Very good
B+ grade	60-74%	Good
B grade	50-59%	Average
C+ grade	40-49%	Below Average
C grade	< 39	Poor Average

Children with C and C+ Grade Were Considered as Academically Backward

A child was considered to be academically poor if he or she had failed frequently in all subjects or had been detained in the same class in the previous year. Identification of academic backwardness was on the basis of the information provided by parents, teacher's reports and individual evaluation, besides the guidelines given by the Department of Education.

The class teacher provided a general report on all aspects of the child's behaviour in school including general activity in the class, association with students and teachers, academic performance, and details regarding participation in play and extracurricular activities. Children were appraised using a semi-structured proforma to extract socio-demographic data.

Table 2: Class Wise Distribution of Academically Backward Children

Gender	7th Std (N=223)	8th Std (N=240)	9th Std (N=247)	Total (N=710)
Boys	29 (13%)	26 (11%)	25 (10%)	80 (11%)
Girls	24 (11%)	23 (10%)	23 (9%)	70 (10%)
Total	53 (24%)	49 (20%)	48 (19%)	150 (21%)

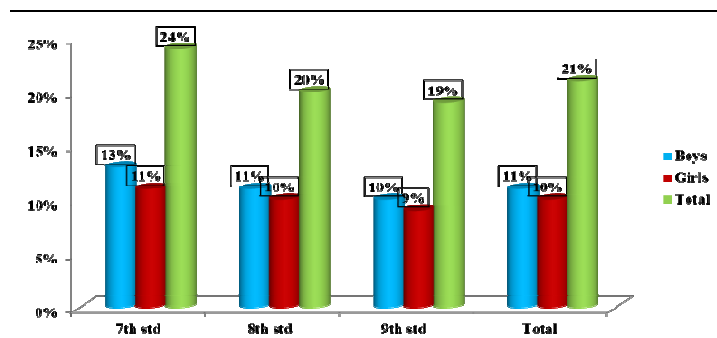


Figure 1

Socio-Economic Status of the Sample

Based on the method recommended by Aggrawal et al. (2005) for establishing a socio-economic status scale, the student data were organized into six categories. Results revealed that three-fourth of the students (74.67%) belonged to the lower-middle category of socio-economic status. About 20 % of the children were poor and a very low percentage of students (5.33%) belonged to the upper-middle category of SES.

Performance Levels of Academically Backward Children - Class Wise

Table 3: Performance Levels of Academically Backward Children - Class Wise

Grade	VI (N =68)	VII (N =39)	VIII (N =43)	IX (N =49)
Good	18 (26%)	5 (13%)	14 (32%)	13 (26%)
Average	14 (20%)	10 (26%)	7 (16%)	21 (43%)
Below Average	22 (32%)	13 (33%)	17 (40%)	8 (16%)
Poor	14 (20%)	11 (28%)	5 (12%)	7 (14%)

Performance of Secondary School Children - Class & Language Wise (Telugu)

Table 4: Performance of Secondary School Children - Class & Language Wise (Telugu)

Grade	VI (N = 71)		VII (N = 62)		VIII (N = 67)		IX (N = 74)	
	Read	Write	Read	Write	Read	Write	Read	Write
Good	31 (44%)	24 (34%)	27 (44%)	23 (37%)	27 (40%)	23 (34%)	31 (42%)	27 (36%)
Average	28 (39%)	29 (41%)	30 (48%)	29 (47%)	33 (49%)	34 (51%)	32 (43%)	34 (46%)
Below Average	12 (17%)	13 (18%)	5 (9%)	10 (16%)	7 (10%)	10 (15%)	11 (15%)	9 (12%)
Poor	-	5 (7%)	-	-	-	-	-	4 (5%)

Performance Levels of Secondary School Children - Class & Language Wise (English)

Table 5: Performance Levels of Secondary School Children - Class & Language Wise (English)

Grade	VI (N = 71)		VII (N = 62)		VIII (N = 67)		IX (N = 74)	
	Read	Write	Read	Write	Read	Write	Read	Write
Good	22 (31%)	17 (24%)	19 (31%)	16 (26%)	24 (36%)	20 (30%)	22 (30%)	18 (24%)
Average	30 (42%)	29 (41%)	26 (42%)	25 (40%)	27 (40%)	24 (36%)	27 (36%)	27 (36%)
Below Average	12 (17%)	15 (21%)	12 (19%)	14 (23%)	13 (19%)	19 (28%)	16 (22%)	18 (24%)
Poor	7 (10%)	10 (14%)	5 (8%)	7 (11%)	3 (4%)	4 (6%)	9 (12%)	11 (15%)

Performance levels of Secondary school children - Class & Language wise (Hindi)**Table 6: Performance levels of Secondary school children - Class & Language wise (Hindi)**

Grade	VI (N = 71)		VII (N = 62)		VIII (N = 67)		IX (N = 74)	
	Read	Write	Read	Write	Read	Write	Read	Write
Good	24 (34%)	19 (27%)	21 (34%)	17 (24%)	24 (36%)	19 (28%)	23 (31%)	19 (26%)
Average	30 (42%)	25 (35%)	22 (35%)	20 (32%)	26 (39%)	26 (39%)	27 (36%)	28 (38%)
Below Average	10 (14%)	15 (21%)	12 (19%)	16 (26%)	13 (19%)	15 (22%)	16 (22%)	15 (20%)
Poor	7 (10%)	12 (17%)	7 (11%)	9 (14%)	4 (6%)	7 (10%)	8 (11%)	12 (16%)

Specific Learning Problems

Out of 150, 16.5% (25) were found to be having problems in Arithmetic computation; 33% (50) were having reading problems; 40% (60) and 36% (54) were having writing / spelling problems.

Table 7: Writing problems (Dysgraphia) of academically backward children (N= 150)

Dysgraphia / Common Errors in Writing:	No & %
Inadequate sentence structure	27 (18%)
Errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling	33 (22%)
Does not maintain left to right orientation	7 (5%)
Ignores margins& lines	10 (7%)
Excessive over writing	7 (5%)
Omits matras	13 (9%)

Table 8: Reading Problems (Dyslexia) of Academically Backward Children (N= 150)

Reading Comprehension	No & %
Answers with prompts for every question	15 (10%)
Question to be repeated once, twice, or thrice	15 (10%)
Question to be translated to mother tongue	13 (9%)
II. Reading errors	No & %
Word by word reading	15 (10%)
Poor pronunciation	22 (15%)
vocabulary not up to grade level	18 (12%)
Guesses words	10 (7%)
Consonant sounds (digraphs, diphthongs, blends) not known	25 (16%)
Vowel pairs not known	22 (15%)
Lacks structural analysis (morphology)	22 (15%)

Table 9: Spelling Problems of Academically Backward Children (N= 150)

3 Spelling Problems/ Errors:	No & %
Omission of beginning or ending letters	15 (10%)
Auditory perception problems	15 (10%)
Unable to distinguish differences between long and short vowels	15 (10%)
Can not Spell words phonetically	22 (15%)
Confusion between consonant sounds of d/b, d/t, m/n, f/v, p/b, s/z	18 (12%)

Table 10: Language Wise Writing Problems of Academically Backward School Children (N = 150)

Observations	Telugu No & %	Hindi No & %	English No & %
Problem with legibility – Formation of words, letter alignment & spacing	18 (12%)	22 (15%)	60 (40%)
Problem with Sentence construction – grammar & punctuation	15 (10%)	26 (17%)	66 (44%)
Problem with Spellings	12 (8%)	20 (17%)	65 (43%)
Problem with Content coverage	12 (8%)	17 (11%)	68 (45%)
Problem with Expression of ideas	12 (8%)	17 (11%)	73 (48%)

Reasons for Academic Backwardness

Among the 150 students selected for the study, **60%** (24) were having **academic problems**, **30%** (12) were having **family problems** and only **10%** (4) were having health problems.

Academic Reasons

The academic problems in the selected students involved the following:

- Difficulty in comprehending the information in the subjects (65%),
- Inability to respond to the questions in the examinations (54%),
- Aversion towards particular subjects and slow writing skills (52%)
- Inability to concentrate on the study tasks (48%),
- Poor writing skills and inadequate spoken language skills (47%),
- Inability to study (40%),
- Poor time management (35%),
- Considering studies as a burden (33%),
- Aversion to long school hours (31%) and
- Fear of studies, boring teaching methods and poor peer acceptance (28%).

The findings by Baker and Cantwell (1985) also corresponded to those of this study. They too agreed that the main contributing factor for academic backwardness was because of inadequate reading and writing skills. This may due to poor capability of the student, absence of support & guidance at home and participation in household and agriculture work.

Familial Reasons

The familial reasons among the students involved the following:

- Non-cooperation of the family members (48%),
- Poor family assistance (42%),
- Absence of guidance and supervision (44%),
- Lack of facilities (36%),
- Participation in household tasks (31%),
- Family problems (39%),
- Distractions and disturbances by siblings (30%),
- Poor home environment (27%),
- Health issues among the family members & family occupation as a barrier (21%) and
- Financial crisis and financial disputes (22%),

These results are in agreement with those of Nair, Paul and Mohan (2003), who emphasised the fact that family environment, educational status of parents, personal distraction and approach towards studies are elements influencing scholastic performance. Parental participation and support too had a profound effect on the academic performance of school children (Toporet.al. 2010).

Health Reasons

The health reasons among the school children involved the following:

- Lack of concentration (40%),
- Fatigue because of travelling long distances to school (39%),
- Worries (31%),
- Headache (29%),
- Frequent illness (25%),
- Absenteeism due to illness (23%),
- Stomach ache (21%),
- Physical weakness(21%) and
- Vision and hearing problems (14%)

These results are similar to those obtained by Saraswati *et al.* (2009), who elaborated that some of the major health issues noticed in school children were asthma, joint pains, migraine, refractory errors, heart problems, menstrual problems and general ill health; all of these health issues may hamper the child's studies.

Table 11: Factors Affecting the Academic Performance of Students as Perceived by Teachers (N=20)

Parameters	Impact Factor Given by Teachers			
	HI	AI	LI	NI
Study habits	20	-	-	-
Home related	9	5	4	2
Teacher related	12	5	3	-
School related	4	6	7	3
Time management	10	7	3	-
Test competence	12	6	2	-
Academic competence	13	5	2	-
HI- High Impact	AI-Average impact		LI-Low impact	

Table 12: Reasons for Low Achievement as Perceived by the Teachers (N=20)

Reasons for Low Achievement	Teacher's Ranking
Illiterate parents	1
Parent's lack of interest in child's education	2
Learning problem	3
Lack of academic support from parents	2
Chronic illness of one of the family member/ child	3
Slow learner / Learning disability	3
Family violence	4
Single parent	4
Alcoholic father	4
Lack of parental involvement	3

The studies by Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993 have reported that academic accomplishment is considerably impacted by the socio-economic and cultural environment of the family, as well as parental contribution in school activities. Lower education status of the father and a unhappy family resulted in poor scholastic performance in adolescents, as seen in in a study from Kerala [Nair, 2003].

Apart from the aforementioned factors, several other factors in the family too play a role. Frequent quarrels between parents and siblings, broken homes, substance abuse in parents and being burdened by domestic responsibilities were noted to be the factors that were common among most of the low achievers compared to the high achievers (GarcíaBacete, F.J, Rosel Remírez, J, 2001).

Children with chronic illnesses performed academically poor compared to the healthy children [Fowler, M.G, Johnson, M.P, Atkinson, S.S, 1985]. Generally, children with chronic illnesses had the added disadvantage of low socioeconomic status. Such children were more prone to poor school achievement. This highlights on the need for providing educational support to children with chronic illnesses.

Learning disorder (LD) is vital reason for academic backwardness in children with normal intelligence [Karande S, Kulkarni M. 2005]. In this study, even among children with normal intelligence, there were several factors that contributed to them having learning difficulties. Parental encouragement is considered to be most essential for the child's academic advancement. A family with a stable environment is more likely to provide the child with a positive future.

Table 13: Risk Factors for Academic Backwardness as Perceived by the Teachers (N=20)

Risk Factors	Teachers Ranking
Parental illiteracy	1
Low birth weight of the child	2
Chronic Health problems	2
Family history of mental illness	3
Family history of mental retardation	2
Parental alcoholism	4
Low income	3

Remedial Learning Intervention Programme

Remedial learning intervention programmes (22) were conducted for the academically poor children, with special emphasis on their individual learning problems.

Methodology/Procedure

Remedial learning programmes were scheduled as follows: 3 sessions per week or 2 classes every day for the 6th & 7th classes and the 8th & 9th classes, respectively. Group reading & peer tutoring were organized for children with poor reading & writing skills.

Measures Undertaken in the Remedial Programme to Enhance the Learning Skills of the Academically Poor Children

The eventual intention for remedial teaching was to assist the students with their grades and enable them to learn to the best of their ability; in addition, this programme should ultimately enable them to integrate into the mainstream classes as far as possible.

Step 1

Identify the reading & writing skills of the academically poor children in three languages (English, Telugu and Hindi).

Step 2

Based on the data obtained regarding the academically backward children, and the previous performance records and teachers' observations, the children were further filtered and categorized as good, average, below average and poor (class-wise and subject-wise). The findings showed that most children were lagging in their English language skills. Therefore, the remedial programme concentrated initially on improving the learning skills in English. The same approach was employed for the other two languages as well.

Step 3

Teaching English through phonetic system,

- Initially, preparing a list of the base words provided by children,
- Listing the provided words as 3-, 4- or 5-letter words,
- Encouraging reading using the phonetic technique,

- Identifying simple words from the text,
- Reading difficult words through syllabification method,
- Peer tutoring for children below average and poor academically,
- Making children understand what they are read,
- Conducting regular spelling tests and
- Assignments on writing short stories/ event/ most memorable experiences. Elaborating on a given themes etc

Step 4

Developing worksheets to enable the students to read English through the syllabification & phonetic drill method.

Step 5

Worksheets were prepared focusing on the following critical areas to help the students Read, Write & Spell correctly/ proficiently

- Understanding of letter-sound correspondence
- Development of phonemic awareness
- Fluency based on letter-sound relationships
- Rich vocabulary through reading drills
- Auditory /Phonological Processing exercises
- Visual Processing exercises
- Visual-Motor Processing exercises
- Automatic recognition of sight words
- Receptive and Expressive Language exercises

Step 6

Preparing worksheets to enable children to overcome the following **spelling errors**:

Spelling Errors Due to Auditory Channel Deficits

Substituting t for d, f for v, sh for ch – lack of auditory discrimination; confusion of vowels – spelling bit as bet; omits the second letter in blends – spelling fled as fed.

Spelling Errors Due to Visual Channel Deficits

Visualizes the beginning or ending of the word but omits the middle of the word – spells happy as hapy; lack of visual memory; reverses letters or words – b for d, no for on; inverts letters – u for n, m for w.

Step 7

Preparing worksheets to enable the children overcome the following **reading problems**:

- **Sound Blending:** Inability to blend letter sounds.
- **Auditory Perceptual deficits:** Lack of sound discrimination (e.g., b, p, d, t, c, g, j, n, m).
- **Visual Dyslexia:** Difficulty in translating written letters into sounds.

The Following Exercises were Provided for Strengthening the Child's Reading Skills

- Identifying the errors made in reading,
- Listing familiar words (sight words), such as birds, fruits, transport, games & sports, animals, etc.,
- Enabling the children read the words through the phonetic method,
- Listing the difficult words that appear in the text (as per the class),
- Making children read the difficult words through the syllabification method,
- Familiarizing the children with the syllabification rules,
- Coaching the children on digraphs, consonant blends, vowel teams, etc.,
- Conducting spelling tests,
- Providing exercises on syllabification and
- Concentrating on errors made, correcting them and repeating the syllabification process.

The Following Exercises were Provided for Developing Comprehension While Reading

- Making children read familiar words with pictures,
- Reading simple stories with pictures,
- Reading text with by immediately comprehending its meaning,
- Reading drills (3 sessions per week) and
- Reading independently with comprehension.

The Following Exercises were Provided for Improving the Writing Skills

- Connecting the word to the picture (picture letter identification),
- Writing the word for the picture,
- Writing the dictated words from the text,
- Correcting errors & repeating the exercise,
- Writing a small story or a write-up on any theme,
- Completing worksheets for homework,

- Writing a paragraph dictated from the text and
- Correcting errors & repeating the exercise.

The teachers were also associated with the Remedial Learning Programme to augment their proficiencies in fashioning a supportive environment for children and for the continuation of the programme in the future.



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

Impact of Remedial Learning Intervention programme on Learning problems of Academically backward children (N=150)

Table 14

Specific Learning problems	Pre	Post 1	Post 2
1. Dysgraphia / Common Errors in writing	33 (22%)	27 (18%)	18 (12%)
2. Dyslexia / Reading comprehension	30 (20%)	23 (15%)	14 (9%)
3. Spelling problems	30 (20%)	24 (16%)	12 (8%)
4. Problem with Phonic skills	24 (16%)	21(14%)	12 (8%)

Duration of First intervention: 4 months; **Duration of Second interventions:** 6 months

The above table illustrates on the progressive development because of Remedial Learning Intervention Programme. This programme helped to tackle the learning difficulties in academically poor children.

CONCLUSIONS

Enhancement of education and attainment success is not only the concern of the school. Many factors beyond the classroom can affect whether children and youth succeed in school. The findings in this study provide useful perceptions on the requirement for better funding in education, so that efficient interventions may be implemented that would enable the duplicating the successful outcomes that were noticed by the remedial programme in a larger sample.

In addition to the remedial learning programme, the non-school issues (family & home factors recognized by the teachers as the cause for academic backwardness) are to be recognized and attended tousing effective counselling. This mixed approach would enable the improvement of academic seven in the disadvantaged students, thereby making school programs a greater success.

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